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Rural District of Winslow.

Medical Officer of Health's Report.

1907.

To the Rural District Council of Winslow.

Winslow, February, 1908.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my 26th Annual Report.

Winslow, in company with the whole of England, has experienced many changes and improvements in Sanitary matters during that period. The duties of the Guardians and Sanitary Authority have been more clearly defined, County Councils, District Councils, and Parish Councils have been created, all bearing somewhat on Sanitary matters. Many new orders have been issued by the Local Government Board relating to the Factory Acts. Bakehouses, Slaughter Houses, &c., have to be inspected, and now Dairies and Cowsheds are to be visited and reported on. The latter Act you have adopted this year.

An important legislation has been sometime in force with regard to dilapidated dwelling houses by which the Sanitary Authority can condemn cottages, &c., which in their opinion are unfit for human habitation. New houses can be built in towns or villages by the Council if there is not sufficient accommodation. This latter is I think rarely acted on, as agriculture is not sufficiently remunerative to enable the labourers to pay adequate rents.

The notification of Infectious Diseases Acts has always been very beneficial, enabling your Officers to immediately undertake isolation and disinfection, and issue orders to cope with the tendency to Epidemics whenever disease has appeared. Isolation Hospitals or Tents can be acquired in aid of this laudable object.

In your district the old brick or uncemented pipes are being gradually done away with in favour of properly jointed and cemented pipes. The old-fashioned middens still exist in too many cases. They consist too often of holes dug in the garden, without bricks or cement, through which the liquid percolates into the surrounding soil, injuring the water supply and sometimes soaking into the ground beneath the cottages. The boards over these pits become rotten, allowing smells to poison the air and admitting flies, which may afterwards settle on food, utensils, or the inmates of the contiguous cottages.

The Water Supply, except in two Villages, is still obtainable from wells, and the question of obtaining a Public Supply in Winslow is still in embryo. There has been a petition to the Council by some of the inhabitants, but at a Public Meeting held in the town, by a very large majority it was decided to rely on the old system after rather an animated discussion. There were three amendments proposed to the original proposition, which was that a Public Water Supply for Winslow should be provided, namely, 1st—a direct negative; 2nd—that the District Council be asked to reconsider the question and provide, if possible, at a small expense, a Public Supply for the lower end of the town; and thirdly—that a Company should be formed with the same object.

You will see by Table A. that the number of Deaths totalled 103. Seven were deaths in the Work-house, all inmates from Poplar, so that the mortality in the whole District was 96. 23 in No. 1. 30 in No. 2. 43 in No. 3 District.

The Births were 157; 61 more than the deaths; about the usual proportion. If we had employment for the people the population would increase greatly, instead of steadily decreasing owing to the younger stock seeking work elsewhere. The Infant mortality was 18, fairly satisfactory. There were seven deaths from Cancer; twelve from Heart Disease; seventeen from Respiratory Diseases. We had no deaths from the notifiable Zymotic Diseases.

In Table III, you will notice that there were twelve cases notified during the year; one was a slight case of Diphtheria at Tattenhoe, and as the disease existed in a neighbouring town it was contracted from there probably. No other person was affected. We had no case of Typhoid.

Scarlatina.—There were 10 cases notified; two at Mursley, a legacy from the previous year.

One at Great Horwood, a bad case, with severe disquamation. The mother and two children had to pass through the patient's room constantly to get to their sleeping accommodation, which was separated only by a loosely fitting door. The mother had to do all the nursing, yet no one else took the complaint, a singular thing.

At Little Horwood a child gave the complaint to her mother, who was very ill, but completely recovered, and another sister was slightly affected. I could not trace the origin.

At Dunton, in a farm singularly situated for isolation, three children were ill. This house had been rather notorious for some years, in that the inmates were never very well. *Scarlatina* and *Diphtheria* had been in the house before. There was defective water supply. This is now being remedied.

Drainage.—The Village of Mursley, in which an expensive system of drainage was instituted some years ago by order of the Local Government Board, has not been quite satisfactory lately. The District Council and the Inspector have been investigating the cause and remedial measures were suggested. You will remember that I made a report on the very defective state of the closets and drainage at the Schools in this Village. Some five or six hundred pounds is being spent on repairs at this present time.

In Stewkley an improved system of drainage has been gradually extended the last few years. This is the only village in which part of the drainage finds its way to the Thames,—the Ouse draining the rest of the District. The Thames Conservancy are aiming at improving the Thames water and are very strict as to any effluent which may pollute it. Stewkley is a hundred miles from the Thames. An Inspector takes a sample for analysis from time to time of the Stewkley effluent. In summer, however, the Ditch is frequently dry, and at any time it is difficult to conceive that the Thames can be polluted from such a distant source, considering the small quantity of effluent, which has moreover been through settling tanks, &c.

Bakehouses, Factories, &c.—These have been inspected in due course. Some of the Bakehouses have been whitewashed four or five times in the year. There are none underground, neither are they connected with living rooms, and no drainage pipes are in connection.

Three Cottages have been closed as unfit for human habitation. One of these has been put in repair.

Systematic inspection of the district has been made and various drains remedied and pig nuisances abated. Since the styes have been removed at Stewkley the autumnal visitations of Scarlet Fever and *Diphtheria* have abated.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

T. F. VAISEY,

Medical Officer of Health.

